DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 458 CG 025 662

AUTHOR Duker, Laurie, Ed.
TITLE Unintentional Gun Deaths among Children. Firearm Facts.
INSTITUTION National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, Arlington, VA.; Summit Medical Center, Oakland, CA.
SPONS AGENCY Health Resources and Services Administration (DHHS/PHS), Washington, DC. Maternal and Child Health Bureau.
PUB DATE [94]
CONTRACT MCU-117-007
NOTE 3p.; For related Firearm Facts sheets, see CG 025 656-664.
AVAILABLE FROM National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse, 8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 600, McLean, VA 22102.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accident Prevention; Adolescents; *Children; *Homicide; Laws; Safety; *Violence
IDENTIFIERS Firearms; Gun Control; *Guns

ABSTRACT

Children are at risk of being killed or injured by a gun if their parents own a gun because many guns obtained for self-defense are kept loaded and within reach of children. This brief fact sheet presents statistical information relating to accidental deaths involving young people and firearms. Safety measures are suggested for preventing accidental shootings, such as keeping guns locked up and requiring trigger locks or loading indicators. Support is given for stricter gun control legislation affecting gun manufacturers. Includes one graph on unintentional firearm mortality rates by gender and age group. (RB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 378 458

Firearm Facts

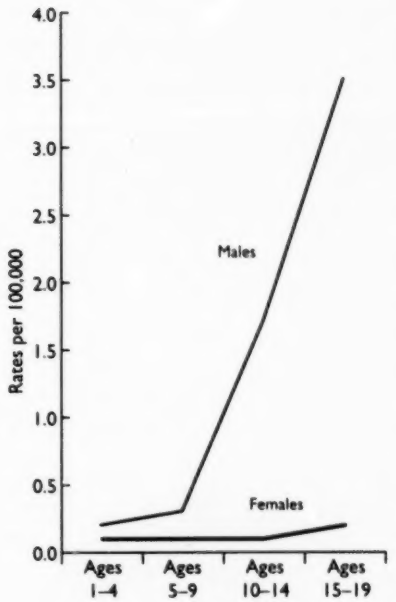
UNINTENTIONAL GUN DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy



Unintentional Firearm Mortality Rates per 100,000, by Gender and Age Group, 1991
(Unpublished data, Lois Fingerhut, NCHS)

Unintentional firearm-caused deaths are a small percentage of all firearm-caused deaths among children. Most can be prevented. Children are at risk of being killed or injured by a gun if their parents own a gun because many guns obtained for self-defense are kept loaded and within reach of children.

In 1990, 4,941 children in the United States under the age of 19 years died from gunshot wounds; 538 of these children were shot unintentionally.[1]
For every unintentional gun death, there are at least five non-fatal injuries.[2,3] Gun injuries include permanent disabilities such as blindness, loss of limbs, or paralysis. Almost all of these shootings are preventable.

Most children unintentionally kill themselves or other children while they are playing with a gun they found in their home or the home of a family member or friend.[4]
A child who shoots another child is also a victim of gun violence.

Boys are more likely to be shot and killed unintentionally than are girls, and they are most at risk from 15 to 19 years old.[5]
Gun-owning parents generally trust teenage boys with guns.[6]

Over half of all handgun owners keep their guns loaded at least some of the time.[7] In one study, 53% of gunowners surveyed did not keep their guns locked up.[8]
An easily accessible loaded gun may put a family in danger rather than protect it. A gun in the home is more likely to result in the unintentional shooting death of a member of the household than in the self-defense shooting death of an intruder.[9]

An estimated 30% of all unintentional shootings could be prevented by the presence of two safety features: trigger locks and loading indicators.[10]
In a report to the U.S. Senate, the U.S. General Accounting Office found that every single unintentional shooting in which a child under the age of six killed themselves or others could have been prevented by a childproof safety device.[10]

Few guns have trigger locks and loading indicators because no law requires them.[11]
Most gun control laws in the United States target gun users rather than gun manufacturers. For instance, some states are trying to prevent unintentional shootings by passing laws which hold gun owners responsible if a child kills himself, herself, or another person with an improperly stored firearm. Requiring gun manufacturers to include a trigger lock on every gun manufactured would automatically and effectively prevent a great number of unintentional firearm deaths.

CG025662

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

1. Fingerhut, L.A. (1993). Firearm mortality among children, youth, and young adults 1–34 years of age, trends and current status: United States, 1985–90. *Advance Data from Vital and Health Statistics*, No. 231. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

2. Wood, N.P. and Mercy, J.A. (1988). Unintentional firearms–related fatalities, 1970–1984. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 37: 47–52.

3. (U.S. GAO. [1991]. *Accidental Shootings: Many Deaths and Injuries By Firearms Could Be Prevented.*) In a Galveston, Texas, study, none of the 19 people who were unintentionally shot during the study period died. (Lee, R.K., Waxweiler, R.J., Dobbins, J.G., and Paschetag, T. [1991]. Incidence rates of firearm injuries in Galveston, Texas, 1979–1981. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 134: 511–521). These figures cannot be generalized to the entire nation, but they indicate that in addition to the hundreds of children who are unintentionally killed with guns each year, many thousands more are injured.

4. Wintemute, G.J., Teret, S.P., and Kraus, J.F. (1987). When children shoot children, 88 unintended deaths in California. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 257:3107–3109.

5. Fingerhut, L.A., Kleinman, J.C., Godfrey, E., and Rosenberg, H. (1991). Firearm mortality among children, youth and young adults 1–34 years of age, trends and current status: United States, 1979–88. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 39: 1–15. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

6. Webster, D.W., Wilson, M.E.H., Duggan, A.K., and Pakula, L.C. (1992). Parents' beliefs about preventing gun injuries to children. *Pediatrics* 89:908–914.

7. The Gallup Organization. (1991). Handgun Ownership in America. Princeton, NJ. Distributed by the Los Angeles Times Syndicate, May 29, 1991.

8. Weil, D.S. and Hemenway, D. (1992). Loaded guns in the home: Analysis of a national random survey of gun owners. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 267: 3033–3037.

9. Kellermann, A.L., and Reay, D.T. (1986). Protection or peril? An analysis of firearms–related deaths in the home. *New England Journal of Medicine* 314: 1557–60.

10. U.S. General Accounting Office. (1991). *Accidental Shootings: Many Deaths and Injuries Caused by Firearms Could Be Prevented.* Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office.

11. Wintemute, G., Hancock, M., Loftin, C., McGuire, A., Pertschuk, M., and Teret, S. (1992). Policy options on firearm violence. In Samuels, S.E. and Smith, M.D. (Eds.), *Improving the Health of the Poor: Strategies for Prevention* (pp. 79–96). Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Children's Safety Network

National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health — MCHB Maternal and Child Health Bureau

Edited by
Laurie Duker, M.P.P.M.
Children's Safety Network at the
National Center for Education in Maternal
and Child Health

Researched and written by
Youth Alive at the Summit Medical Center,
Oakland, CA

Published by
National Center for Education in Maternal
and Child Health
2000 15th Street North, Suite 701
Arlington, VA 22201-2617
(703) 524-7802 • fax (703) 524-9335

Additional copies available from
National Maternal and Child Health
Clearinghouse
8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 600
McLean, VA 22102
(703) 821-8955 • fax (703) 821-2098

This publication has been produced by NCEMCH under its cooperative agreement (MCU 117-007) with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.